Case Study – Urban County Department of Juvenile Justice

Overview

For the past several years, the Urban County Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) has been struggling with overcrowding in their detention facility, as well as an inability to maintain appropriate staffing levels. This has lead to a vicious cycle; remaining workers are pressed into overtime in order to maintain required staffing ratios, resulting in stress, burnout, and the loss of more good workers. The conditions in the facility have been suffering, and the Department's management realized that something needed to be done, both to control overcrowding and to improve the workforce.

Last, year, the Department decided to implement the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI), which will address overcrowding as well as other issues in the system, but will result in a significant change in the way the Department does business. As part of JDAI, the Department has re-examined its mission, vision and strategic plan. Workforce Planning was included in the strategic planning process, and it has been integrated into the overall JDAI work plan.

A Workforce Planning Team (WPT) has been formed, lead by the Director of Operations. The Team consisted of one line staff member from each unit, two shift supervisors, the detention manager, the research and evaluation coordinator, and Human Resources (HR) coordinator. (Human Resources is centralized in the County, so the Department's HR coordinator reports to the County HR Director.) The work of the Team was officially authorized by the Senior Management Team, including the Department Director. The Senior Management Team approved the WPT Work Plan, and the WPT makes monthly progress reports to senior management.

Over the first six months the WPT made considerable progress, guided by the agency's strategic plan and the Team's Work Plan. They conducted an Environmental Scan, a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), Supply and Demand Analysis, and a Gap Analysis, which were used to inform an improvement plan, including a series of Gap-Closing Strategies.

Profile: Urban County Department of Juvenile Justice

- Workforce Planning Initiative: Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI)
- Workforce Planning Time Period: 2 years
- Workforce Concerns: poor job fit, low salary, high turnover, adapting to new delivery model
- Targeted Job Classification: Detention line worker
- Number of Budgeted Detention Line Workers: 130
- Number of Current Vacancies: 15
- Facility Capacity: 120 youth; four 30-bed units.
- Average Daily Population (ADP): 150 youth
- Staffing Ratios: 1 staff: 5 youth on day shifts;
 1:7 on overnight. (Required by law, so staff work overtime)
- Projected APD Change: Reduce to 120 (eliminate overcrowding) in one year.
- Program Goals: Fill open positions, retain existing staff, and prepare staff for shift to JDAI model.



After prioritizing the results of their environmental scan, the WPT created the following SWOT Matrix:

Urban County Department of Juvenile Justice – SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses				
 Staff love working with the kids Nearly 75% of shift supervisors have been with the agency for more than 10 years. JDAI may create new growth opportunities for staff in the intake and assessment unit or in detention alternative programs. Despite staffing shortages, all staff completes 40 hours of professional development each year. Since the DJJ has begun posting position openings online, the number of applicants has significantly increased. 	 Staff are overwhelmed by frequent overtime Line workers often make more money with overtime than salaried supervisors, so supervisory positions are not considered desirable. The one-year turnover rate for line staff is 30%. The staff does not reflect the diversity of the community. Many workers are struggling to adapt to the rapid changes of the JDAI initiative. 				
Opportunities	Threats				
 Budget cuts to the Department of Social Services may lead to the closing of several residential facilities in the next year, potentially affecting 100 workers with transferable skills. Due to increased concerns about mental health and suicide prevention, additional clinical positions have been funded on all units. There is legislative support for salary increases for line workers in the upcoming year. Three local schools of social work require students to complete a practicum, and many students seek placements working with adolescents. Changing neighborhood demographics have lead to an influx of bilingual and bicultural residents. 	 The Urban County Department of Corrections is also facing a worker shortage, and as a result they have been intensively recruiting recent graduates. They also offer a signing bonus and higher salaries than the DJJ. Two local universities offer majors in criminal justice, but neither requires coursework in juvenile justice. The issue of overcrowding has lead to a lot of negative publicity for the agency. The legislature has not approved salary increases for line workers in 3 years. The Department of Social Services is cutting back on its in-service management training, which is previously offered to DJJ employees. 				

After considering the results of the analysis, the Workforce Planning Team chose four areas of focus for their Gap-Closing Strategies:

- Workers do not have the correct <u>competencies</u> to adapt to the new way of doing business under JDAI.
- There is high turnover among frontline detention workers.
- Talented detention workers are not moving into available supervisory positions.
- The agency has trouble recruiting diverse, qualified applicants.



The Team felt that these were the fundamental issues, and that solving these problems would lead to the resolution of other issues. For example, successful recruitment would relieve chronic understaffing and cut down on overtime and burnout. The Workforce Planning Team also committed to working closely with the JDAI steering committee, since the Initiative will significantly impact the workforce for better or for worse.

- Recruitment
- Selection
- Performance Management
- Professional Development
- Retention
- Succession Planning

The Team decided to focus in the first year on recruitment and selection, retention and succession planning. Those areas were deemed most essential to address the targeted gaps. However, performance management and professional development are both tied closely to reinforcing the goals of JDAI, so they will be addressed in Year Two.

Recruitment and Selection

To alleviate the staffing shortages, the Department had begun to post job advertisements in a variety of new ways: online on their website, message boards and job search websites; on job boards at local colleges and universities; and through the listservs of local nonprofit networks. Those efforts had yielded many more applicants, but most were not a good fit for the job. A quarter of new hires quit within the first three months, most saying that the job was "not what I expected." This turnover was in addition to the loss of more experienced workers who did not like the reform initiative.

Defining Competencies

The Workforce Planning Team realized that they needed to better define the competencies of an effective detention worker, and they needed to find a better recruitment method for the right candidates.

The Team began by engaging line staff, supervisors and managers in a series of focus group to identify the competencies of a superior detention worker. The process proved difficult; the group needed to consider not only what makes a strong detention worker, but also what allows workers to thrive in the reform environment. Competencies like "Adaptability" are much more important in the current environment than they were a few years earlier. Also, focus groups had difficultly narrowing the list of competencies to those of superior performers. For example,



"Safety Awareness" is a basic requirement of all workers; it is not an element that necessarily separates the good from the great frontline workers.

After a series of meetings, the DJJ staff was able to reach consensus on the following competencies:

Action Oriented

Consistently maintains high levels of activity or productivity; sustains long working hours when necessary, works with vigor, effectiveness and determination over a sustained period.

Adaptability

Adapts well to changes in assignments and priorities; adapts behavior or work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles; approaches change positively and adjusts behaviors accordingly.

Applied Learning

Able to learn and properly apply new job-related information in a timely manner. Has the ability to absorb and comprehend job-related information from formal training and other formal and informal learning experiences.

Building Trust

Interact with others in a way that gives them confidence in one's motives and representations and those of the organization. Is seen as direct and truthful; keeps confidences, promises and commitments.

Communication

Clearly conveys and receives information and ideas through a variety of media to individuals or groups in a manner that engages the listener, helps them understand and retain the message, and invites response and feedback. Keeps others informed as appropriate. Demonstrates good written, oral and listening skills

Conflict Management

Uses appropriate interpersonal styles and techniques to reduce tension and/or conflict between two or more people; able to size up situations quickly; able to identify common interests; facilitates resolution.

Cultural Competence

Cultivates opportunities through diverse people; respects and relates well to people from varied backgrounds, understands diverse worldviews, and is sensitive to group differences; sees diversity as an opportunity, challenges bias and intolerance.

Initiative

Takes action without being asked or required to; achieves goals beyond job requirements; being proactive; taking prompt action to accomplish objectives.



Quality Orientation

Monitors and checks work to meet quality standards; demonstrates a high level of care and thoroughness; checks work to ensure completeness and accuracy.

Stress Tolerance

Maintains effective performance under pressure; handles stress in a manner that is acceptable to others and to the organization.

Teamwork

Participates as an active and contributing member of a team to achieve team goals. Works cooperatively with other team members, involves others, shares information as appropriate, and shares credit for team accomplishments.

Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skills

Possesses, acquires and maintains the technical/professional expertise required to do the job effectively and to create client/customer solutions. Technical/professional expertise is demonstrated through problem solving, applying professional judgment and competent performance.

Job Description

Once the Workforce Planning Team had established the job competencies, they revisited the detention worker job description. The same description had been in place for nearly twenty years and needed to be revisited in light of the JDAI initiative. Before tackling the job description, the Team published the competency list in the departmental newsletter and solicited feedback. DJJ staff is not unionized, so staff approval was not required to make changes, but the Team wanted the process to be transparent. The headline was "Is this the person you want to work with?" Most of the feedback was positive, though some staff expressed skepticism that the bar would need to be lowered in order to fill open positions.



Urban County Department of Juvenile Justice Detention Worker Job Description

Effective Date: January 1, 2007

Job Title: Detention Worker

Job Classification: Detention Worker I

Salary: \$25,000 – \$27,500/year

Job Purpose:

The detention worker is responsible for the daily structure and supervision of youth in order to meet the physical, social and recreational needs of youth while ensuring the security of the detention facility, which is designated for the short-term care of high-risk youth awaiting adjudication or placement.

Goals and Objectives:

- Maintaining a daily structure in the facility
- Engaging youth in educational, social and recreational activities
- · Identifying and promptly responding to issues affecting the health and safety of youth
- Working collaboratively with program staff, other professionals and families
- Completing all necessary documentation

Reporting Relationships:

Title of position to whom this job reports: Detention Supervisor

These positions report to this job: N/A

Duties and Responsibilities:

- Work collaboratively with all other staff.
- Ensure compliance with daily structure, including meals, hygiene, education, recreation, visitation and sleep.
- Facilitate intake and discharge of youth.
- Continuously engage youth and serve as a pro-social role model.
- Maintain facility safety, including crisis management, response to physical and mental heath issues, and observance of all safety policies.
- Under the direction of the shift supervisor, facilitate community access to youth, including court officers, families and service providers.
- Under the direction of the shift supervisor, participate in the planning of pro-social and culturally appropriate activities.
- Complete appropriate documentation, including facilitating the filing of youths' grievances.



Key Technical Skills and Knowledge:

- · Knowledge of child development and characteristics of delinquent youth
- Knowledge of diverse recreational activities
- Knowledge of juvenile court system and relevant laws and regulations
- Knowledge of crisis management and physical restraint techniques.
- Knowledge of cognitive behavioral and other rehabilitative approaches
- Knowledge of detention techniques, including DJJ policies and procedures manual
- Proficiency in Motivational Interviewing
- Proficiency with JIN, the County Juvenile Information Network
- Strong written and verbal communication skills in English required
- Strong written and verbal communication skills in Spanish desirable

Key Success Factors:

- Maintain a safe, structured, positive environment for detained youth.
- · Facilitate pro-social skill building
- Successfully observe, interpret and respond to youth behavior.
- Function as a member of a team.
- Successfully interact with diverse youth and professionals.

Performance Measures:

- The employee is consistently present for work and appropriately dressed.
- The employee maintains a consistent pro-social structure on shift.
- The employee engages youth in a way that shows empathy, builds trust and encourages pro-social behavior.
- · The employ responds appropriately to youth behavior
- The employee accurately completes all required documentation.

Competency Model:

- Action Oriented
- Applied Learning
- Communication
- Cultural Competence
- Quality Orientation
- Teamwork

- Adaptability
- Building Trust
- Conflict Management
- Initiative
- Stress Tolerance
- Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skills

Job Fit:

- · Frequent engagement in social and recreational activities; potentially physically exerting
- Working consistently as a member of a team
- Constant interaction with diverse, high-risk youth
- · Working in a secure setting with constant attention to safety

Career Pathways: Identify the classification/s that might be next career opportunities for employees in this classification.

Detention Workers who demonstrate excellence in the competencies above will be candidates for the position of Detention Supervisor.



Behavioral Interviews

Once the competencies had been established, the Team turned to revamping their interviewing strategies. The County Human Resource Department had expressed interest in adopting behavioral interviewing throughout the Department, and had conducted a training the prior year. The DJJ HR coordinator and the detention manager had both attended the training, and shared the process with the WPT. The Team went through several steps to establish the questions: questions were brainstormed in small groups, then reviewed and narrowed in the larger group, and then tested with some staff members. Not all of the competencies were included specifically in questions. Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skills were evaluated through a more traditional review of resumes, as well as the cumulative answer to questions. Teamwork and Quality Orientation were also assessed cumulatively.

Some examples of the behavioral interview questions were:

- Describe a time where you had to help resolve a conflict between two people or groups.
 How did you approach the situation? How was the issue resolved?
- Describe a situation where you had to work under significant stress, and how you managed the situation?
- Describe a situation where you had to quickly learn and use a new skill. What helped you to learn most successfully?

In DJJ, the detention manager, HR coordinator, and frontline supervisors were all involved in interviewing. The WPT had the questions in place, but they were unsure how to train staff in using the behavioral interview format, and evaluating the interview. The biggest concern was how to understand how to "translate" descriptions of other experiences to and make them applicable to juvenile justice. DJJ approached the County HR Department for assistance. The HR Department partnered with the consultants that had done the original training to meet with the WPT about an evaluation guide, and then to conduct a half-day training with staff.

Recruiting for Diversity

Once the department had a better sense of what they were looking for, they still needed to decide where to look, and how to give prospective applicants a better sense of the job. Lack of diversity was a significant issue. The majority of youth in the detention facility were African American and Latino, but the staff was predominately White. Also, a growing number of youth did not speak English proficiently, which hindered communication and caused safety concerns because there were not enough bilingual staff to cover every shift.

The WPT knew from their environmental scan that the demographics of their community was changing, and that more bilingual and bicultural workers were in the community. However, their recruiting strategies were not reaching the appropriate applicants. Members of the Team decided that they needed to talk to people in the community. Several key informant interviews were set up, including the local professional association for African American business professionals; managers at a local job placement agency that serves the Spanish-speaking population; and minority student associations at local universities. The Team also convened a volunteer focus group with African American and Latino staff to solicit their ideas for recruitment.



The responses from the Spanish-speaking community were relatively straightforward; recruitment done through Spanish-language media, as well as preferential hiring of bilingual/bicultural candidates, would increase the applicant pool. The interviewees were able to offer a long list of periodicals, radio stations and websites that would reach this population.

Members of the African American community had much more complex perspectives on recruiting. The negative publicity that the Department had received included a great deal of discussion of the disproportionate detention of minority youth. The negative image of the Department gave the community members pause about encouraging qualified workers to apply for jobs there. The Workforce Planning Team brought this information back to the JDAI planning Team, and two decisions were made: business leaders would be invited to participate in the Disproportionate Minority Contact working group, and more media efforts would be focused on the Agency's progress on DMC reduction. In addition, two African American line workers who were alumni of the local university scheduled quarterly meetings with the minority students' group. The meetings were focused on recruiting and also for discussing detention issues.

Job Previews

To give applicants a better sense of what detention work encompassed, the Workforce Planning Team considered producing a <u>realistic job preview video</u>, but members hesitated about the resources required to produce it. However, the Department needed some way to prepare potential hires for the job. They instead settled on a "mini-job preview." Star performers in the department were videotaped answering two questions: "What is an average day as a detention worker like?" and "What makes a great detention worker?" Interns from a local film school edited the responses to a seven-minute video that was posted on the Department's web site. All job postings encouraged potential applicants to view the video. In addition, applicants who were invited back for a second interview were also given the opportunity to tour the facility.

Outcomes

Over the next six months, the Workforce Planning Team continued its aggressive recruitment strategies, and they applied the "mini job preview," the new competencies, and the behavioral interview to the selection process. The result was an applicant pool with a better understanding of the position, and an interview process that more easily identified those who were a good fit for the job. Of those who were hired during the first three months of the new system, only five percent quit in the subsequent three months; that represented an 80 percent reduction over their previous rates.

Next Steps

The Workforce Planning Team also acknowledged that in the long run, they needed to address the issue that most local college graduates are not prepared to work in juvenile justice; their recruitment efforts were looking for the diamond in the rough. The Team identifies work with local universities as essential to longer-term workforce planning. However, that plan was put on the back burner until more resources could be allocated to the work.



The group also realized that hiring more diverse staff members was not enough to address cultural competency issues in the facility. Some staff members were resentful of new hires who were given preference because of their language skills, and there was debate about whether it was appropriate to speak in languages other than English in the facility, since all staff could not understand. In addition, the diverse staff created a growing awareness of cultural issues such as lack of culturally appropriate programming. When the organizational cultural survey indicated that these issues were affecting morale, the Workforce Planning Team realized that they needed to work with the JDAI steering committee to improve efforts in these areas. Improved cultural competency will be part of the Year Two of workforce planning.

Retention

During the gap analysis phase of the project, the WPT instituted a process for exit interviews. Interviews conducted with departing employees over the first six months of the Workforce Planning process showed three strong trends: workers who were not a good fit for juvenile justice, workers who were burned out, and workers who needed a higher income to support themselves and their families. The WPT decided to focus their retention efforts on the third area and look more closely at whether the DJJ offers competitive salaries.

The salary levels in Urban County DJJ are established by the state, with a small differential based on each county's cost of living. Urban County has the highest differential in the state, so DJJ staff was often accused of whining by state officials when they advocated for salary increases. However, staff exit interviews clearly indicated that salaries were insufficient. So, the DJJ partnered with a local business school to conduct a salary study. They compared their salaries for frontline detention workers to:

- Urban counties in adjacent states.
- Other state and local agencies that recruit applicants from similar pools (Department of Social Services, the local school systems, Department of Corrections and Adult Probation).

The study showed that DJJ workers have salaries that are 5-10 percent lower than detention workers in neighboring states, but that the salaries are 20 percent lower than adult corrections workers in Urban County. Salaries were on par with paraprofessionals working in the public schools and the Department of Social Services; both of those groups have lower educational requirements for entry-level workers.

The DJJ used this information as part of an informational campaign for the state legislature. Most legislators indicated that they were planning to vote for a salary increase, but the salary data combined with exit data information made a strong case for an increase. The legislature approved a 7 percent increase for frontline detention staff and supervisors.

Succession Planning

The DJJ is very proud of its classroom training program, and all staff attends 40 hours of formal professional development each year. As a result of JDAI, the Department will be investing significant resources in revamping its training program. At the outset, there was not a formal



management training program for new supervisors. A mentoring program was considered, but that also created problems: many of the seasoned frontline supervisors were also struggling with the JDAI model, and as a result lacked the skills to train potential supervisors in the new way of doing business.

Fortunately, with the salary increases at the line and supervisor level, as well as the reduction in overtime, supervisory positions became more desirable for frontline staff, and applications for positions began to increase. As a result, the Workforce Planning Team saw their next task: applying the Workforce Planning approach to the supervisory classification. The Team now needs to better define the competencies of supervisory work, and improve the process of training, evaluating and supporting supervisors.

Summary

The Workforce Planning Team was proud of it's accomplishments in Year One. They felt that they had taken a systematic approach to identifying the Department's Workforce Issues, and they had successfully prioritized their efforts based on the resources available. Their efforts achieved several tangible outcomes, several of which are likely to lead to reduced turnover costs for the Department. To celebrate the

Summary: Urban County Department of Juvenile Justice Gap-Closing Strategies

Areas of Focus:

- Define detention line worker competencies
- Reduce turnover
- Improve leadership pipeline
- Recruit diverse, qualified applicants.

Activities in Year One:

- Defining competencies for detention line worker
- Establish behavioral interviews
- Create "mini job preview"
- Improve recruitment of diverse staff
- Complete salary study
- Implement exit interviews
- Continue organizational climate survey

Outcomes for Year One:

- Increase in bilingual/bicultural staff
- Reduction in 3-month turnover rate for new staff
- Reduction in overtime
- 7% salary increase
- Improvement in Organizational Climate

Next Steps:

- Continue regular exit interviews and organizational climate surveys
- Monitor staff demographics and diversity
- Monitor overtime frequency
- Revisit performance management process
- Revisit professional development processes.
- Improve Cultural Competency training
- Apply Workforce Planning to Supervisory Classification
- Implement management training program
- Work with local universities to improve student's preparedness for juvenile justice careers.

achievement, the Department Director acknowledged the Team with a "Team of the Year" award (which the Department may make an annual event), and highlighted their achievements in the Department's Quarterly newsletter.

However, the Team also realized that their efforts were not yet comprehensive, and that more work is left to be done. The new hiring criteria were not in alignment with performance appraisal criteria, which is a potential source of frustration for new staff. In addition, several of their efforts in Year One brought new issues to light, or brought issues to the forefront that had not been considered priorities at first. The Workforce Planning Team reviewed their WFP Work Plan and began work on their strategies for Year Two.



Urban County Department of Juvenile Justice Workforce Planning Work Plan

Key Challenge	Action Strategies How will we address our key challenges?	Tactics/Steps Required Specifically, how will the strategy/objective be accomplished?	Person(s) Responsible Name	Timetable Due Date	Status Not Started Started Completed Ongoing	Performance Measures/Milestones What measure will we use to determine successful completion of action items?
Agency has trouble recruiting diverse, qualified applicants	Improve recruitment and selection processes	Revise job descriptions	Director of Operations HR Coordinator	5/06	Completed	Increase in applicants who meet minimum qualification standards Increase in applicants who are eligible for hire based on new competency model Increase in new hires who successfully complete the probationary period. Increase in racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of frontline workers
		Make job postings more visible to diverse segments of the community	Line workers on WPT HR Coordinator	Ongoing	Ongoing	
		Develop Behavioral Interviewing Guide	HR Coordinator	7/06	Completed	
		Develop "mini" job preview	Unit Supervisors on WPT	8/06	Completed	
		Improve media image of DJJ	Department Director	Ongoing	Ongoing	
		Work with Universities to revise juvenile justice-related curricula	Department Director Training Coordinator	6/07	Not Started	
		Improve utilization of interns	HR Coordinator	6/07	Not Started	
Workers lack competencies for the new way of doing business	Align recruitment, selection, and training with new competency model.	Define competencies of superior performers	HR Coordinator	6/06	Completed	Increase in applicants who are eligible for hire based on new competency model Number of existing frontline workers who
		Develop Behavioral Interviewing Guide	HR Coordinator	7/06	Completed	
		Improve Cultural Competency Training	Training Coordinator	9/07	Not Started	successfully complete revised training course based on JDAI principles.
	Align performance appraisals with new competency model.	Revise performance appraisal form and guides	HR Coordinator Unit Supervisors on WPT	3/07	Not Started	Number of existing frontline workers who rate "meets" or "exceeds" on revised competency-based performance appraisal.



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High turnover in frontline detention workers	Assess and improve overall worker satisfaction	Administer organizational climate survey	Unit Supervisors on WPT	4/06, 4/07	Completed	Decrease in new staff turnover during probationary period (3 months) Improvement in organizational climate Decrease in overall annual turnover among frontline workers.
		Institute exit surveys for all departing detention workers	HR Coordinator	4/06	Completed	
		Complete Salary Study	Research and Evaluation Coordinator	7/06	Completed	
		Advocate to Legislature for salary increase	Department Director	9/06	Completed	
		Reduce overtime by filling open positions	HR Coordinator	Ongoing	Started	
Talented workers not becoming supervisors	Offer a competitive salary	Complete Salary Study	Research and Evaluation Coordinator	7/06	Completed	Increase in number of
		Advocate to Legislature for salary increase	Department Director	9/06	Completed	
	Improve succession planning and leadership training	Provide specialized training on managing the reform effort	JDAI Coordinator	2/07	Started	applicants for supervisory vacanciesIncrease in number of new supervisors who
		Implement mentoring program	HR Coordinator	9/07	Not Started	successfully complete the probationary period
		Implement management training program	Training Coordinator	12/07	Not Started	

